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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4259
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SUBJECT: NEPAL: PEACE MINISTER SAYS EUROPEANS PAMPERING
MAOISTS

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) On July 10, Minister of Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel told the Ambassador that the Maoists were delaying resumption of the combatant verification and had not changed their behavior. The Minister complained that the Europeans, by "pampering" the Maoists, were increasing Maoist stature while ignoring Maoist failure to comply with peace agreement commitments. Poudel emphasized, and the Ambassador agreed, that if the other political parties were clear in their stance toward the Maoists and united, the Maoists could be forced to improve their behavior. If Prime Minister Koirala died before the Constituent Assembly election, the Peace Minister foresaw a political stalemate that would leave him as acting Prime Minister. Poudel ventured that with the support of the Government of India, the problems in the Terai could be solved.

Europeans Pampering Maoists

12. (C) At a farewell call on July 10, Minister of Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel told the Ambassador that the Maoists were delaying verification by the UN Mission in Nepal of Maoist combatants, had not changed their habits of violence and intimidation and were still holding confiscated land and property. Poudel complained that the Europeans were "pampering" the Maoists and asked the Ambassador to talk with his European counterparts. The Peace and Reconstruction Minister and the Ambassador agreed that increasing the stature of the Maoists without first requiring a change in their behavior was harmful. The Ambassador conceded that several of the European bilateral relationships with the Maoists were confusing, but noted that the European Union was trying to be helpful. The EU was bringing in a large number of observers for the November Constituent Assembly election, for example. The Ambassador advised Poudel to continue

holding a tough line with the Maoists.

Political Parties Need a Clear Stand on the Maoists

13. (C) Poudel and the Ambassador concurred that it was critical for all of the mainstream parties to press the Maoists to meet all of their peace process commitments. The Ambassador stated that, if the other parties could stay united, the Maoists would have no choice but to go along. Poudel agreed, but emphasized that the other parties in the Interim Government had no clear policy toward the Maoists; he noted specifically the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), which recently considered an alliance with the Maoists at its Central Committee meeting. The Peace Minister stressed that if the other parties were clear, the Maoists would be sidelined.

Poudel Foresees Political Stalemate

14. (C) Poudel confirmed that, if the Prime Minister died or became incapacitated before the Constituent Assembly election was held, Poudel would become acting Prime Minister until the other political parties reached a consensus on a successor. The Peace Minister explained that he did not believe the Maoists or the CPN-UML would be able to reach an agreement on a leftist candidate. The result would be a political stalemate that would keep him acting as Prime Minister and the Nepali Congress Party leading the country until the election was held.

Madhesis' Demands Met; India To Tighten Border

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15. (C) The Ambassador told the Minister that he was optimistic in light of the Interim Parliament's passage of the necessary election legislation and the absence of widespread negative reaction to the key Constituent Assembly Members Election Act. Poudel responded that the Interim Parliament had met the Madhesis' demand for proportional representation and had properly postponed to the Constituent Assembly consideration of the question of "self determination." Regarding violence in the Terai, the Peace Minister informed the Ambassador that, in recent meetings with the Government of India (GOI), GOI leaders had committed to tightening the border. The Minister stressed that the dialogue during these meetings and the attitude of the Indian leadership had given him hope that the problems in the Terai could be solved.

Communicating the Ministry's Mandate

16. (C) The Ambassador inquired about the Ministry's public relations strategy and asked whether the Ministry was implementing or had plans to implement the media and communication strategy that it had developed in cooperation with a USAID consultant. (Note: USAID, through its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), supported a media consultant in March and April to assist the then Peace Secretariat to develop a media and communication strategy to more effectively inform the public about the peace process and the mandate of the Ministry.) The Minister responded that the Ministry had three important mandates: internally displaced persons, reconstruction of critical infrastructure destroyed during the conflict, and the promotion of the peace process. Poudel did not refer directly to the media strategy, but stated that the Ministry was playing an important role in mediating between competing interest groups.

Comment

17. (C) In closing, the Ambassador congratulated Minister Poudel on his active leadership of the new Peace and Reconstruction Ministry since its formation April 1. He praised Poudel for a commendable job mediating between the various minority groups and the political parties. Poudel's frustration with the Maoists and the response of much of the international community is understandable, as is his frustration with the ambiguity of the political parties toward the Maoists. The support of the GOI in tightening the border will reduce violence in the Terai, but it will not solve the problems. Security in the Terai will ultimately depend more on the political parties' ability, and particularly the Nepali Congress party as head of the Interim Government, to assuage the minority groups' concerns about inclusiveness and the election process while sidelining the extremists.

MORIARTY